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FILE ONLY

CBS Witness Says General Set Ceiling

By M. A. FARBER

Col. Donald W. Blascak, an Army intelligence officer who is still on active duty, testified yesterday that he believed Gen. William C. Westmoreland imposed a ceiling on enemy strength estimates in Vietnam in 1967 that led to a "corrupt" report for President Johnson.

Colonel Blascak testified at General Westmoreland's libel trial against CBS in Federal District Court in Manhattan that the 25-page report should have put enemy strength at 500,000 to 600,000, twice what it reported, and should have included the Vietcong's self-defense forces.

David Boies, a lawyer for CBS, read the colonel a sentence from the report that said "current evidence does not enable us to estimate the present size" of self-defense forces.

Q. Is that a true statement, sir?

A. No, it is not. It's a very carefully packaged lie.

David M. Dorsen, a lawyer for General Westmoreland, leaped to his feet, objecting. The answer was ordered stricken by Judge Pierre N. Leval.

Assigned to C.I.A.

Colonel Blascak was only the second military officer on active duty to testify in the 17-week-old trial. In 1967, the colonel was on temporary assignment to the Vietnamese affairs staff of the Central Intelligence Agency, where he met Samuel A. Adams, a C.I.A. analyst who is now a defendant in the case.

Yesterday, Mr. Boies asked the colonel — a lean, bespectacled figure with an iron-gray crewcut — whether, at the time, he had discussed with Mr. Adams his feelings about the estimate for the White House of Communist troop strength.

"I do not relish the answer to this question, but I must give it," said Colonel Blascak as an impassive General Westmoreland studied him from a few feet away.

Colonel Blascak said he told Mr. Adams that "at the very highest level" of the military command in Saigon "there had to have been a ceiling placed on the numbers."

Q. Did you tell Mr. Adams who was responsible at the highest levels?

A. I find this very difficult.

Q. I know you do, sir, but I must ask the question.

A. I believe and I told Sam Adams that I felt General Westmoreland had placed a ceiling on the figures and would not allow his analysts to raise the estimate higher than that figure.

General Westmoreland was commander of United States forces in Vietnam from 1964 to 1968. His \$120 million suit was prompted by a 1982 CBS Reports documentary, "The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception," for which Mr. Adams, who left the C.I.A. in 1973, was a paid consultant.

Program Charged 'Conspiracy'

The documentary charged that, for political and public relations reasons intended to show that the Vietnam War was being won, the general's command engaged in a "conspiracy" in 1967 to understate the size and nature of the North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces.

Over the objections of the C.I.A., the program said, General Westmoreland had set an "arbitrary ceiling" of 300,000 on reports of enemy size, mainly by removing the Vietcong's self-defense forces from the official listing of enemy strength known as the order of battle and insisting that a current number for them not be included in the report for the President.

General Westmoreland testified last November that he deleted the Vietcong's self-defense forces because he believed they posed no offensive threat and could not be counted accurately and because their inclusion in the order of battle at a high number would mislead Washington and the press about

the real might of the enemy. Those forces had been newly estimated in 1967 at 120,000 — an increase on paper, if not in the field, of 50,000.

The only previous military witness at this trial who is not retired was Col. John F. Stewart, who testified for General Westmoreland. Colonel Stewart, who served in Vietnam in 1967, is now the head of an intelligence unit at Fort Bragg, N.C.

Colonel Blascak, who has served 28 years in the Army, is now the senior intelligence officer for V Corps, stationed in Frankfurt. He served twice in Vietnam, in 1962 and 1965, and, during his duty at C.I.A. headquarters in Langley, Va. between 1966 and 1968, made a half-dozen visits to the war zone.

For three years following that assignment, while General Westmoreland was Army Chief of Staff, Colonel Blascak was an executive assistant in intelligence management to Maj. Gen. Joseph A. McChristian, then the Army's chief of intelligence. General McChristian — who was General Westmoreland's intelligence chief in Saigon from July 1965 to June 1967 — is scheduled to testify for CBS today.

Colonel Blascak told the jury yesterday that intelligence estimates of enemy strength demanded "total integrity" and should be completely free of "political considerations."

During 1967, he said, he contributed to the preparation of the special report for President Johnson, working closely with Mr. Adams and George W. Allen, who was then deputy chief of Vietnamese affairs for the C.I.A. and who recently testified for CBS.

"It was a very small office in terms of real estate, and it was difficult to avoid anybody even if you might have wanted to," Colonel Blascak said. "We were tight."

The colonel described Mr. Adams as possessing "integrity and honesty I have seen in few men since." Mr. Allen, he said, "had only slightly less time in Vietnam than Ho Chi Minh."

Colonel Blascak said that, like Mr. Adams and Mr. Allen, he believed the part-time, hamlet-based self-defense forces, who wore civilian clothes, caused thousands of American casualties through mines, booby traps and regular arms. Those forces, he said, "were the absolute base of the insurgent movement."

"An insurgency is much like an iceberg," the colonel testified. "Only the top of it protrudes from the top of the water. The rest of it is not easily seen, but it's there and it's the element that gives you the most contentious problem because it's everywhere."

Colonel Blascak said he knew of no intelligence that supported the removal of the self-defense forces from the order of battle in 1967. "To the contrary," he said. He said the estimate for the President — which was ultimately approved by Richard Helms, the Director of Central Intelligence — "did not convey an honest, truthful meaning" and served "a terribly disuseful function" by failing to alert the White House to enemy capabilities.

During cross-examination by Mr. Dorsen, Colonel Blascak seemed combative and impatient. When Mr. Dorsen asked him whether he recalled

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certain enemy strength figures being advanced by General Westmoreland's command, the colonel said: "I don't know what a recollection is. I'm telling you that the bottom line was 298,000, and that was 200,000 too low."

Colonel Blascak conceded that a range of strength for enemy forces of 50,000 to 200,000 would be too broad to be "a useful figure." Earlier in the trial, General Westmoreland's lawyers had introduced a 1967 analysis by the C.I.A. station in Saigon that said the military's new estimates for the self-defense forces "have a probability of error of minus 50 percent and plus 100 percent."